

MIAMI HERALD  
12 April, 1985

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 2

# U.S. analysts: Castro skipped Soviet funeral in an image ploy

By ALFONSO CHARDY  
Herald Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — President Fidel Castro's failure to attend last month's funeral of Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko was a deliberate effort to project an image of independence from the Soviet Union, U.S. intelligence analysts have concluded.

They said in several assessments prepared for the Reagan administration that the episode probably took place with the blessing of the Kremlin itself in an effort to trick President Reagan into believing Castro is ready to negotiate. One official dissented, however.

Other analysts said Castro skipped the funeral in an effort to show the United States and emerging democratic governments in Latin America that he is not a Soviet puppet.

They also concluded that initial evaluations suggesting serious differences between Castro and the Soviets over economic questions or support for Nicaragua were off target and perhaps deliberately stimulated by Soviet and Cuban officials.

While Soviet-Cuban differences over these questions may be real, analysts said, they are not big enough to warrant a split with the Soviets.

The intelligence evaluations were made available on the condition that the agencies that produced them

not be identified

An official of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington dismissed the assessments as "artificial speculation" designed to "create confusion." He said Castro did not attend Chernenko's funeral because he had "prior commitments."

The same official disclosed that immediately after it was announced Castro was not going to Moscow, the State Department called the Cuban mission to ask if it was a "signal for the United States." The mission replied that it was not, the official said.

One U.S. analyst, who agreed to speak on condition he not be identified, said that at first U.S. and other foreign diplomats "swallowed" the explanation that Castro chose not to go to Moscow because of possible economic differences.

There was, he said, "supportive evidence," such as reports Moscow had rejected Castro's requests to expand economic aid to Cuba for industrialization plans.

"Now, however, the conclusion is that it was all a deal, a plan," the analyst said. "It appears to have been part of the current Soviet-Cuban-Nicaraguan peace offensive designed to show that the Soviet bloc is all for peace while the Reagan administration is all for war."